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SALT Treaty Gets Backing of Joint Chiefs

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The Joint Chiefs of Staff are "not really enthusiasts" for the SALT II treaty, acknowledged one of their number, Adm. T.B. Hayward, the Chief of Naval Operations.

But the chiefs appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday to give a guarded, conditional endorsement to the new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty with the Soviet Union. Their aim was clear. Hayward put it this way: "Pressure decision-makers."

According to the chiefs, "SALT II is a modest but useful step in a long-range process which must include the resolve to provide adequate capabilities to maintain strategic equivalence."

But Gen. David C. Jones, chairman of the chiefs, who did most of the testifying, declined to link any particular defense programs to support for the treaty and bristled at any "implication of being bought off."

Jones insisted that "regardless of the outcome of the SALT II ratification process, there is an urgent need to proceed resolutely and deliberately with a well-thought-out program of force modernization, both to

avoid the undesirable international consequences of strategic inferiority and to create the necessary incentives for Soviet agreement to significant reductions as the arms control process continues."

Criticizes Civilians

Jones was critical of past civilian masters of the military. He claimed that previous administrations were given military advice that, if followed, would have left the nation better off in the 1980s and made the Russians more agreeable to significant arms reductions in the round of SALT negotiations just completed.

The four chiefs and their chairman sat side-by-side at the witness table in the big Senate Caucus Room, from time to time outnumbering the senators who questioned them as the long afternoon of SALT testimony wore on.

"Despite differing degrees of concern among the joint chiefs of staff on specific aspects of SALT II," Jones testified, "all of us judge that the agreement which the president signed in Vienna is in the U.S. national interest."

Chief among those concerns was one that the mere existence of a treaty would lull the public into believing that a larger expenditure for a strengthened strategic arsenal was not necessary.

The chiefs did have specific concerns and they voiced some of them yesterday. For one thing they were concerned about the ability of the United States to adequately monitor Soviet behavior in order to verify compliance with the new treaty.

"Our review of these matters indicated that the U.S. ability to monitor Soviet compliance with the many

provisions of the agreement vary substantially," Jones said. Thus, there are risks in this area of the treaty, he said, adding that the chiefs on balance found the risks "acceptable provided we pursue vigorously challenges to questionable Soviet practices, improvements

in the capability of our monitoring assets, and modernization of our strategic forces."

Another of the chiefs' concerns was the treaty provision that permits the Soviet Union to retain 308 of its mammoth SS-18 intercontinental missiles.

The chiefs would have preferred "a major reduction" to cut down on the payload the Russians can hurl at the United States. At the same time, Jones said limiting the Soviet Union to 10 warheads did go some of the way toward denying them the full use of this throwweight advantage.